

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :
 :
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF : NTSB Accident No.
THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
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Interview of: CAPTAIN RAY THOMPSON

Sunday,
December 6, 2015

JAXPORT
Blount Island Marine Terminal
Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB

This transcript was produced from audio
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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MIKE RICHARDS, NTSB

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(3:51 p.m.)

INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Good afternoon, everyone. This is Mike Kucharski from the NTSB. The time is approximately 15:51 on Sunday, the 6th of December 2015.

We're at the Blount Island Terminal at JAXPORT at the administration building in the conference room and we're getting set to interview Captain Ray Thompson in relationship or in reference to the El Faro sinking back on the 1st of October. And, Captain Thompson, before I go any further is that what you prefer to be called, Captain Thompson?

CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You can call me Raymond or Ray.

INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, whatever your, then I'll call you Captain unless you correct me otherwise.

CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay.

INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And before I go through some of the formalities and read some of the things that, read of the script here about the interview process and the party process I've asked you if we can record this.

CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. And
2 as I mentioned before, some of these things I'll
3 repeat. So now, so you have some clarity again and so
4 we have it on the record you will be offered, you will
5 be given a copy of this transcript. It will be
6 offered, it will actually come through Lee Peterson who
7 is the party coordinator for TOTE here at the meeting.

8 And we'll, at this conference, at this
9 interview we will introduce everybody. But we have
10 from the NTSB of course you know TOTE, Coast Guard,
11 they are all parties to this investigation. On the
12 phone we may have ABS participation. They are also a
13 party to this investigation, the American Bureau of
14 Shipping.

15 Is there anybody that or any of these groups
16 that you would not like to participate?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. The NTSB is
19 a federal agency charged with determining the probable
20 cause or causes of transportation accidents and for
21 also promoting transportation safety. We're not part
22 of any other agency, the Department of Transportation,
23 FAA, Coast Guard and we have no regulatory or
24 enforcement powers, okay.

25 I'll stop there and say we don't but it

1 doesn't bar any license actions or other actions by
2 other possible parties, okay. The party system as I,
3 that's the way we operate. And just maybe, I'll maybe
4 do a little digression here a little bit different from
5 how the Coast Guard operates.

6 They have parties in interest. We have
7 parties. Parties we invite. They don't have a right
8 to demand to come. We just think it's good to have
9 parties because they can offer information to try to
10 really help us determine what happened.

11 Okay, when again it's, there's no
12 enforcement. There's no litigation that we're involved
13 with. Parties in interest you can ask to become the
14 Coast Guard and individuals like yourself could be
15 parties of interest in a Coast Guard investigation,
16 cannot be in an NTSB. They're really like companies,
17 okay.

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: There are
20 exceptions. If it's a one person company it could be,
21 okay. Our investigation process is really, well four
22 part. Fact finding, that's why we're here now. We
23 analyze, determine probable cause and then we usually
24 have recommendations.

25 So in a major like this, major accident it's

1 almost certain to have recommendations. If you don't
2 understand a question please have me repeat it or
3 anybody that asks a question. Again, it's not that
4 we're trying to trick anybody or win or lose situation.
5 The true winners are the public or other mariners, you
6 know, from the information we gather.

7 So please, you know, if something is
8 misstated, a previous answer if you want to go back and
9 correct it as you're thinking along that's fine. We
10 can stop the tape. Any time you want to take a break,
11 fine, let's take a break, okay. So just let us know.

12 The purpose of the investigation again is
13 for safety not to assign fault, blame or liability. We
14 cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality in this
15 interview, the information you provide.

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Understood.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What will happen is
18 this interview, it's transcribed. You look it over,
19 errata sheet and sometime in the near future, I say I'm
20 guessing within the next six months or so it will
21 become part of the public docket.

22 What that means is that anybody, any, the
23 general public can look at your interview, okay?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: It will be just a

1 transcription. We won't keep any tapes. Again we
2 offer no immunity from legal or certificate actions. I
3 mentioned about the transcript and let me just also
4 mention about the personal representative. You're
5 allowed to have one personal representative, of course
6 it can be an attorney.

7 They cannot provide any answers on your
8 behalf. It has to be your answer.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Understood.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any time you want
11 to stop and talk to your personal representative, I
12 think I know who it is. When we go around he'll
13 identify himself. You have a personal representative
14 here?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes, okay. And so
17 they really can't object to the questions. But, you
18 know, if there's any confusion on the question or
19 something like that, Gil, you know, we'll just go off
20 the record. And it's not, again it's not to confuse
21 somebody. It's to get your correct answer.

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Understood.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any questions so
24 far?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Before we
2 begin let me, I had mentioned my name is Mike
3 Kucharski, Michael Kucharski. I'm group chairman for
4 Nautical which includes stability. I take it back. We
5 now have a stability component, group.

6 So it will be more the nautical operations.
7 It will be cargo operations, navigation types things,
8 questions, okay.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And in back of me.

11 MS. SERRIDGE: Melissa Serridge, HR Manager
12 with TOTE Services. Also part of the Human Performance
13 Group.

14 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Hi, Ray. I'm Carrie
15 Bell. I'm the Human Performance Group Chairman, NTSB.

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Hello.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Good afternoon, Ray. [REDACTED]
18 [REDACTED] I'm a civilian Coast Guard marine casualty
19 investigator. I'm a licensed Merchant Marine officer.
20 I work with Carrie Bell and Melissa Serridge.

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Good afternoon. I'm [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard. I'm part of the Nautical
24 Operations Group.

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Hello.

1 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB
2 and I'm chairing the Meteorology Group.

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Hello.

4 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE
5 Services. I'm part of the Survival Factors Group.

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Hi, Patty.

7 MR. PETERSON: Lee Peterson. I'm the TOTE
8 party coordinator.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Lee.

10 MR. FELTEL: Gilbert Feltel, Tanner Bishop
11 Law Firm here as Mr. Thompson's or Captain Thompson's
12 representative.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, very good.
14 Thanks, everyone. And on the phone?

15 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services,
16 Nautical Operations Group.

17 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB,
18 Survival Factors Group.

19 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Eric Stolzenberg,
20 NTSB, Naval Architecture Group.

21 MR. SEBRON: And, Jeff Sebron (phonetic),
22 U.S. Coast Guard, also Naval Architecture Group.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. Thank
24 you, gentlemen. And as a reminder please put your
25 phones on mute until you are actually talking. And

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1 I'll remind the group again for those people further
2 away could you speak up. Don't, if it feels like
3 you're yelling that's okay at least the transcriber
4 will, you do them all a favor if they hear you clearly.

5 Mr. Thompson, Captain Thompson, could you
6 give us your nautical background starting from
7 education if you want to go back further than that,
8 education and then where you've shipped and sailed with
9 and licenses you have.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Went to SUNY Maritime
11 College in the Bronx and got my degree there. And then
12 I worked on a casino boat for a while, worked in an
13 office for a little while and then I joined the union
14 in 1999, AMO and started sailing a third mate.

15 At the time it was Osprey Ship Management.
16 Eventually APL took over a couple of their ships. I
17 was with APL. I worked with TOTE for a little while,
18 AMC for a little while and now I'm with TOTE again and
19 I have worked my way up, you know, second mate, chief
20 mate and master and now I'm sailing captain on the Isla
21 Bella.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. But what
23 year did you come out of SUNY?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: '96.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Could you

1 tell us some of the ships in your sailing experience as
2 best you can remember from when you got out of school?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was on the SP5 Eric G.
4 Gibson, the Lieutenant Colonel Calvin P. Titus, the old
5 Crowley Sea Lion, Sea Wolf. I was on the APL Siprim
6 (phonetic), the APL Pearl, multiple LMSRs the
7 Benavidez, the, I was on the Cornhusker's State, the
8 Gopher State the Flickertail State for breakouts. So
9 multiple ships and I mean to remember them all I'd have
10 to probably go back and look at my discharges.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me step
12 through, this is Mike Kucharski. Let me step through a
13 couple of these. So the Sea Lion that was a container
14 ship, was it?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what was
17 before that?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That's where I started
19 the Calvin P. Titus which was a container ship.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: A container ship,
21 okay. And then the LMSRs are roll on, roll off.

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Low to medium speed roll
23 on/ roll offs, yes, sir.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And some of
25 the other ships, what type were they?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The El Morro I was on and
2 the El Faro, they were roll on/roll off with
3 containers. The Cornhusker State, Gopher State and
4 Flickertail State are government ships. They're the
5 old crane ships and they do multiple exercises for the
6 government.

7 We did a JLOTS off San Diego on one of them.
8 The other ones were just sea trial breakouts. I was on
9 the Great Land back I think it was in 2007. I'd have
10 to look at my discharges to verify that date. But did
11 a trip over there as second mate and that was another
12 roll on/ roll off ship.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. For the
14 benefit of the group the Great Land is that the same
15 basic hull design as the El Faro and the El Morro?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Same basic design, yes,
17 sir.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: With the difference
19 being?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That they had a spar deck
21 on them and these don't.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And they didn't
23 carry containers stacked on deck?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Everything was on
25 trailers, yes.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: It was pure roll
2 on/roll off type ship?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And where
5 was the Great Land operating?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well we did one trip over
7 to Kuwait and on that trip we carried containers on the
8 deck and then we did a fill in run for one of the west
9 coast ships when it went into the yard and then it was
10 just straight roll on/roll off for that trip.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And were the
12 containers after the house on main deck type set up?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They were on trailers.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: On trailers, okay.
15 So there was no stacking of containers?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what position
18 did you sail on the Great Land?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was second mate.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Second mate and
21 that was over going to the Persian Gulf and back?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes. We went over. We
23 went to Kuwait. I think we stopped in Bahrain for, to
24 go on the, into the dry dock for a few days and then
25 continued our voyage back. It was a long trip. We

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1 spent almost 40 something days at anchor waiting for
2 our cargo.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And then
4 were you on the Great Land at all on the Alaska trip?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Just when we filled in
6 for the one Alaska ship that went into the shipyard. I
7 did one or two trips.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: One or two trips
9 being a week, two weeks?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, two weeks.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What time of year
12 was that?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would have to go back
14 and look at my discharges. I don't remember. It was
15 around 2007.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Winter, summer?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't remember.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: You said you were
19 on El Morro and El Faro.

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: El Morro in what
22 position?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was chief mate. I was
24 second mate for a short while on there and then I did
25 port mate.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what does a
2 port mate do?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They show up so that the
4 crew can get its STCW required rest and then you watch
5 cargo ops.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Are you
7 familiar with the term night mate?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir. It's similar
9 to the night mate except our union doesn't refer to it
10 as a night mate.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And on El
12 Faro, let me back up. El Morro how much sailing
13 experience did you have on El Morro as second mate and
14 chief mate?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Second mate I believe was
16 three or four weeks and then chief mate probably a
17 year. I would have to look at my discharges. I got on
18 there, I think it was summer time and then I was on
19 there until we broke out the El Faro.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So we broke
21 out the El Faro. How long ago was that?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would have to look at
23 my discharges to be exact. We did a two week breakout
24 while one of the ships went into the shipyard and then
25 laid that back up and then eventually took it out

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1 again.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Two years, ten
3 years ago?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, this was within the
5 last two years.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Within the last two
7 years, okay. I'm not going to hold you to it exactly
8 but it gives us some kind of a --

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: -- time frame. So
11 when you say when you broke it out where was the ship?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was at the North
13 Florida Shipyard when I got on it.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Which is in
15 Jacksonville?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Was Captain
18 Axelson (phonetic) the master on there?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: He was. Did the
21 ship have a spar deck still on it when you broke it
22 out?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So it had
25 been converted to load on/load off to put containers

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1 on?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe so, yes.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So from
4 approximately two years ago, somewhere in that time
5 frame. So you sailed on the El Faro for how long and
6 in what positions?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was chief mate and
8 relief master.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And as relief
10 master how much master's time did you have on El Faro?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Possibly a month. I
12 would have to look at my discharged to be exact. But
13 about a month.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Let me just stop
15 right there. Any questions as to Captain Thompson's
16 sailing experience or his time on the El Faro, El
17 Morro, Great Land? No questions, okay. And now bring
18 us up to the present. You're on the Isla Bella?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when did
21 you start on the Isla Bella?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I flew out to San Diego
23 August 20th and was working in the office as a
24 consultant and out there and then we brought the ship
25 around. I think we took possession of it October 16th.

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1 I believe we sailed approximately October 19th and I
2 was chief mate bringing in the ship around.

3 Remained on board for a few weeks as chief
4 mate and just last week moved up to master.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
6 Kucharski again. Any questions from around the room or
7 on the phone before we start into more detailed
8 questions? Okay. Captain, Thompson, I would like to
9 bring it in to the El Faro and maybe we'll wander a
10 little bit to compare to the El Morro. Were you ever
11 on El Yunque?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Port mate.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: As port mate?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Can you talk
16 to us a little bit about the ventilation of holds on
17 there? Can you tell us when the holds were ventilated
18 and what the process was?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: When I was on board we
20 used to, depending on if we were going northbound or
21 southbound run the ventilation fans on the one side of
22 the ship and the other side would be off. In port they
23 were always, the fans on both sides of the vessel were
24 always on because of the rolling cargo and all the
25 smoke, you know, from the trucks and stuff.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you turn the
2 fans on or did you direct someone to do that?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As chief mate usually we
4 were doing other things. The second or third mates
5 would turn them on. But you would always go and double
6 check and at the end of the day when you secured
7 everything you would make sure the right fans were on
8 and the other ones were secured.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were there dampers
10 on the cargo fans?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: There was dampers, yes,
12 sir, five dampers.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Would they open
14 them or would they remain open all the time or would
15 they open and close them?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They were open but the
17 crew would exercise them, you know, every month as part
18 of our monthly inspections.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So were they left
20 open normally?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Normally I believe they
22 were left open.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about fire
24 dampers? Are there fire dampers to the holds also?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The fire dampers were on

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1 the, if I remember correctly on that ship they were on
2 the trunks for the vents.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So those
4 were left open also?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe so.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I'm going to
7 stop there on the dampers and the ventilation. Are
8 there questions in the room on the operation of the
9 fans or the cargo or fire dampers? How about on the
10 telephone, any questions?

11 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Yes. This is
12 Eric Stolzenberg with the NTSB, Captain.

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Hello.

14 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: I just wanted to
15 clarify having walked the El Yunque recently the fire
16 dampers you're describing on the El Faro, are those a
17 couple feet off the main deck on the starboard side,
18 excuse me off the second deck port and starboard side
19 where the fire damper a foot, foot and a half from the
20 deck?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir. They were on
22 the second deck.

23 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. We
24 understand from the El Faro was there ever an issue
25 with sea spray or water entering the louvers external

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1 to the ship for those dampers throughout the cargo
2 holds?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I have noticed,
4 no, sir.

5 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. That's
6 fine. Speak to what you know.

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Describe what?

8 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Speak to what you
9 know. I would prefer that, thank you. Additionally
10 was there, were those dampers ever secured for heavy
11 weather in your time aboard any of the pod (phonetic)
12 class vessels?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir, not while I was
14 on board.

15 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay.

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We never experienced
17 heavy weather either when I was on board those ships.

18 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. That's it
19 for me in that line, Mr. Kucharski.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anyone else on the
21 telephone before we move along? Okay. No further
22 questions on that. Did you do a ballast water exchange
23 on the vessel?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir. We used to do
25 ballast water exchange.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: When did you do
2 those?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Underway.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you do
5 one tank, multiple tanks? Can you tell me about the
6 ballast water exchange?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe, to the best of
8 my knowledge, again I've been on the three, you know,
9 multiple ships. But I believe on the El Faro we were
10 doing one starboard and I can't remember the other tank
11 off the top of my head right now.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: When was the last -
13 -

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was approximately two
15 tanks, two ballast tanks.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And when was the
17 last time you served as chief mate on the El Faro?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I probably got off of
19 there August 14th. I was captain and then right before
20 that I was chief mate for a few weeks.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So August 14th was
22 about the last time you were on the El Faro?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And up until that
25 time you were doing the ballast water exchange?

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes. We were doing the
2 exchange as required, yes. If we, sometimes, you know,
3 for stability and things like that you may not be able
4 to do the ballast water exchange. But otherwise we had
5 started doing the ballast water exchanges as required.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Would there be
7 times that, so you mentioned because of stability you
8 wouldn't do it?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On that run, to the best
10 of my knowledge, I don't think we had any issues with
11 doing it. I'm just trying to remember.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Along with
13 the, I don't want to get too far into stability because
14 we have people on the phone to do that. But along with
15 ballast water, did you ever have a situation where you
16 left Jacksonville where you were concerned on, enough
17 on the fuel burn, what you burned on fuel to take on
18 additional ballasts?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir. We, when cargo
20 was on board we would look at the stability and figure
21 in your fuel burn off. So you knew you had a good GM
22 to arrive at the next port with and so it, you know,
23 you would look at everything ahead of time so that was
24 never an issue.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So you never had to

1 put, take ballasts on to compensate for fuel burn?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, no, sir.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Stop there
4 on ballasts water exchange or fuel burn or anything
5 related to that. Gents on the phone? Okay. Moving
6 on. Did you receive a prestow plan in Jacksonville
7 prior to load out?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Sometimes.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what did the
10 prestow plan have on it?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Where the cargo was going
12 to be prestowed and that was it.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any weights
14 associated with them?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, the prestows always
16 have some kind of weights with them.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about odd sized
18 stows, oversized type cargo?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It wouldn't really say
20 that if it was just a prestow.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And you say
22 sometimes you received that?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was it sent to you,
25 was it given to you in a paper form? Was it given to

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1 you by --

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Sometimes we would get it
3 in an e-mail form.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. On the El
5 Faro when did you obtain final stow plan and stability
6 data?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Before sailing.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How far before
9 sailing?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Sometimes five minutes,
11 sometimes 30 minutes. It all depended.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And how did you
13 receive the final stow and stability data?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was brought down by
15 the port captain in a pouch and in the pouch was reefer
16 plan, the dangerous cargo manifest, the thumb drive
17 with the stability plan, a printout of the stability
18 and I believe that was all that was in there.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Who would be
20 the port captain?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Don Matthews.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So Don
23 Matthews would bring it down. He would bring it by
24 paper fashion?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, it was paper in a

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1 pouch and, you know, he would bring it to the vessel.
2 I would go down. We would get the drafts and then I
3 would bring it back up to the ship.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you receive the
5 stability and stow plan in anything but paper?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the thumb drive.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Sorry, the thumb
8 drive. And what did you do with the thumb drive?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would input it into the
10 computer and load it into the ship's stability program
11 which is Cargo Max and then verify every container box
12 weights and make sure they matched the bay plans for
13 the RORO holds make sure the RORO plans matched and
14 then we would sail.

15 Sometimes we would sail prior to looking at
16 that because the port captain had already looked at it
17 and would call the captain with the GM and all the
18 pertinent information and then once we undocked going
19 out the river I would double check everything.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So did you ever put
21 to sea before, I say put to sea beyond the sea buoy,
22 okay, before you had actually looked over all the cargo
23 instability data?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Beyond the sea buoy, no,
25 sir.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: No, okay. So up to
2 or as close in as five minutes before sailing but then
3 you would review the stability in stow after you left?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What happened --

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Sometimes before,
7 sometimes after.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What happens if you
9 have a problem?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've never had a problem.
11 But if you had a problem you can always turn around and
12 go back.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I'm going to
14 stop there. Are there any questions in the room on the
15 receipt of the stability data or the upload into the
16 computer?

17 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the
18 Coast Guard. When the port captain would bring down
19 the thumb drive and the stability information did you,
20 can you explain to us the process of salinity, taking
21 salinity and drafts, what process you followed?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes. The third mate or
23 the second mate, whoever was on watch would obtain the
24 stability every arrival at Jacksonville and probably an
25 hour before departure. And, you know, they would tell

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1 you if it's 1.011 or whatever it ended up being.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Before we go
3 into, this is Mike Kucharski, before we go into drafts
4 and salinity and all that, any questions on the stow
5 plan and the Cargo Max that came out to the ship? Any,
6 how about on the phone? Anybody on the phone?

7 MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith with TOTE
8 Services. I just have one question from Captain Ray.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Go ahead, Kevin.

10 MR. STITH: Okay, Ray. Yes, just to clarify
11 the prestow plan would you typically get that as a load
12 case file for Cargo Max or would it just be a general
13 plan with where the gangs were working and the
14 estimated weights?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: When they sent it, it
16 would be a load case plan and we, like I said we didn't
17 always receive it. We would sometimes get in
18 Jacksonville, sometimes in San Juan and that was it.

19 MR. STITH: Okay, thank you. That's all.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anyone else on the
21 prestow or the final stow plan or the stability Cargo
22 Max?

23 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: This is Eric
24 Stolzenberg with the NTSB. Captain, did you, you said
25 earlier you looked at the Cargo Max calculations for

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1 the departure condition, those are my words.

2 But what are you looking for when you look
3 over what's come on the flash drive and the handout
4 from Mr. Matthews?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Basically I'm verifying
6 that the cargo is in the right spots with the weights
7 as per the paper plan making sure it all matched up and
8 everything was entered properly, no mistakes.

9 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
10 Do you verify that against the trim and stability
11 booklet or are there references in the trim and
12 stability booklet that you also use?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, we had a trim and
14 stability booklet. Yes, sir.

15 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: And how do you
16 use that at the departure time as well?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At the departure time I
18 wouldn't really use it. We would use it whenever we
19 were testing load cases. You would type in the test
20 conditions in, make sure the program was operating
21 properly. I think we did that, I want to say it was
22 quarterly maybe, to the best of my recollection.

23 And other than that I would only use it if I
24 needed something to, you know, to look up for ballast
25 tanks or things like that. Everything else is supposed

1 to be, from that book is supposed to be in the Cargo
2 Max load program.

3 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. Have you
4 received training for the load program that was used
5 aboard the vessels?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

7 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: If you could very
8 briefly describe that?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Can you repeat?

10 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: If you could very
11 briefly describe that training?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We just recently had a
13 guy from Herbert's Engineering come give us an
14 instruction class on the Cargo Max program.

15 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
16 Also regarding Cargo Max, did you notice any
17 differences between Cargo Max, their drafts and
18 observed drafts --

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

20 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: -- where the
21 list, can you describe what you recall specifically
22 with the El Faro?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The calculated drafts
24 don't always match the observed drafts, not by much.
25 The El Faro, I can't remember maybe it was a couple

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1 inches on the bow and stern.

2 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Do you recall if
3 they were less or greater than Cargo Max observed?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: To the best of my
5 recollection, one end was a little bit less and one end
6 was a little bit greater. I can't remember which end
7 was which right now.

8 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
9 Along the same lines did you use a correction factor
10 for hogging and sagging (phonetic) and drafts or how
11 did you deal with hogging and sagging or was there
12 hogging and sagging on the El Faro?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We would, when we did the
14 drafts we basically just read the drafts from the dock,
15 midship's drafts, the forward and aft drafts and we
16 would log it in the log book. We would use salinity to
17 compare it, you know, and that was about it.

18 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: So not a
19 correction or an adjustment for hogging and sagging?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir, not that I
21 remember.

22 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. Along the
23 same lines again was there any bending moment
24 calculations in Cargo Max at the time of departure or
25 things to be aware of that or any bending moment?

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, there's bending
2 moments in Cargo Max. There's a roll period.

3 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: So bending moment
4 in roll period, Cargo Max.

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, shear forces and
6 torsion on the one I'm using now.

7 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. In regard
8 to the El Faro do you recall, I already briefed the
9 answer but if it was within the bending moment
10 limitations at departure?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We were always within the
12 bending moment limitations. Yes, sir.

13 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
14 That's all I have for the moment. Thank you, Captain.

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You're welcome.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. This is Mike
17 Kucharski. [REDACTED] I think, you know, you had questions
18 on draft and draft readings and all that. I think this
19 would tie in very well now with the total discussion
20 and salinity. Would you please continue? Thank you.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Sure, sure. Yes, [REDACTED]
22 with the Coast Guard. When, can you just describe in
23 more detail when the port captain would bring down the
24 thumb drive what process you and the other crew would
25 take to, in order to take the draft, take the salinity

1 and then exactly what you would do with that
2 information?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The second mate or third
4 mate would get the salinity. They would call it in and
5 then I would go down and get the drafts with the port
6 captain. And we have a table that he kept in his
7 vehicle for the different salinities so you knew how
8 deep you can actually load the ship based on the marks.
9 And that was pretty much the process.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: If we were listing we
12 would try to, you know, even the ship up first so the
13 drafts were as accurate as possible.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. With the salinity
15 reading, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again with the Coast Guard. With
16 the salinity reading, did you ever input that reading
17 into the onboard version of Cargo Max?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

19 MR. [REDACTED] And what did that do? Did
20 that brings the drafts closer to the --

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It would address the
22 drafts but there was still always, I don't want to say
23 a correction. They were still different than the Cargo
24 Max.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you. That's all I have.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
2 Kucharski. You mentioned you took drafts with the port
3 captain. Did you take the offshore drafts midship?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, we would have a mate
5 on second deck call in the offshore midship draft.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And they, did they
7 go down a pile ladder? How do they do that?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The one, I believe both
9 ships you can see it from, there's an opening that you
10 can look out the side of and see it on the port side
11 and they would just call it in to you when you asked
12 for it.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How did they do
14 that when it was dark?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Flashlight, good
16 flashlight.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And the
18 draft aft, where did you actually take that?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would read it on the
20 stern usually leaving Jacksonville because you were
21 full.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And the, are
23 you familiar with the correction or the table in the
24 trim and stability book which shows where the draft
25 marks are?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And do you ever use
3 that to correct any readings?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't believe I've used
5 that to correct readings.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: I'm going to stop
7 there and see if there are any questions. I'm sorry.
8 Go ahead, Carrie.

9 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. You
10 mentioned that you had training, instruction on the
11 Cargo Max program.

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

13 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Can you tell us when
14 that was?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Just in the last month.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay, thank you. Do you
17 remember the dates by any chance?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I do not.

19 INVESTIGATOR BELL: That's all I have.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anyone on the phone
21 have questions relating to draft readings, draft marks,
22 salinity readings, use of same with Cargo Max or
23 anything else?

24 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Hi. Jon Furukawa,
25 NTSB. Captain --

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

2 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Prior to the El Faro
3 sinking, did you have any training on Cargo Max?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

5 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. Is everybody
6 getting Cargo Max training now?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe so, sir. I was
8 trained on it recently. The captain of the, the other
9 captain was trained on it. So, you know, I was the
10 chief mate coming across and he was the master and we
11 were both trained on it.

12 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And the chief
13 mate, second mates, third mates also or --

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir, not second mates
15 and third mates. Second mates and third mates haven't
16 been trained on it yet.

17 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay, thank you.
18 That's all I have.

19 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE
20 Services. Is this a different version of Cargo Max
21 than the one you used on the El Faro?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, ma'am, newer
23 version.

24 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Thank you.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What are the, this

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1 is Mike Kucharski, what are the material differences
2 between the newer and the older version?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The newer version it's
4 harder to enter the cargo. The older version you can
5 click and highlight a bunch of containers and type in
6 weight if they were all empties.

7 In this one it seems you have to pretty much
8 individually input each container so it's a little bit
9 more tedious. This one has a 3D aspect to it where you
10 can see the ship and it has a different window that
11 opens up when you go to load cargo into it.

12 And you have to make sure you hit a button
13 that says apply changes. If you don't hit that then
14 the changes don't apply to the actual GM and bending
15 moments and things like that.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What about damage
17 to the, I'm sorry --

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Go ahead.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about damage
20 stability? Are there any changes to damage stability
21 on this program?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This program is wrong
23 right now. Damage stability is not in there. So we
24 have to use the damage stability curve from the trim
25 and stability book.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about any other
2 differences in entering cargo or any other, is there
3 more information that's provided on this?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This one seems to have
5 more information, yes, sir. It's, some of the things
6 you have to poke around and prod to find but you can
7 add like the rolling period to the print out page and
8 there's a selection area where you can go in and
9 highlight a bunch of different things if you want it
10 all to print out in the final print out.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So when you say,
12 this is Mike Kucharski using rolling period, using the
13 rolling period to calculate some kind of a check
14 against GM?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any questions from
17 around the room?

18 INVESTIGATOR BELL: This is Carrie Bell,
19 NTSB. Just to clarify, so is the new program that
20 you're using that you were trained on, were you using
21 that on El Faro?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, it was a different
23 program on the El Faro. It was Cargo Max also, but an
24 older version.

25 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Thank you.

1 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
2 Guard. Is the reason for the training now is it for
3 the new ship? Is that why it's a different version or
4 is it a different version on say El Yunque right now as
5 well?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't answer that. I
7 haven't done the stability on the El Yunque so I don't
8 know. I just know that this program on the Isla Bella
9 is a newer version than it was on the El Faro and it's
10 probably different ships. I don't know.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: On the telephone,
12 any questions?

13 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Eric Stolzenberg,
14 NTSB. Captain, when you mentioned rolling period can
15 you describe what the new Cargo Max does with the
16 rolling period?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: There's an area where you
18 can go into the Cargo Max and select the rolling period
19 and it will show you what your rolling period should
20 be. And for instance say it's 28 seconds or 11
21 seconds, you know, once you're underway you can
22 actually time it and see if, you know, it's pretty much
23 double check on your GM. You can time the rolling
24 period and see if it's close.

25 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. Have you

1 used it at sea, that check actually on your way?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir, on the Isla
3 Bella.

4 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Do you consider
5 it to be very accurate or how did it work?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was pretty accurate.
7 The one trip it was 28 seconds and I remember
8 stopwatching it and it would be 26 seconds to 28
9 seconds on the rolls and of course that's, you know,
10 you gauging when you think the roll stops and starts so
11 that could be off a little bit.

12 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Understood. Do
13 you recall if any of those roll tests were also
14 performed for any of the pod class vessels underway at
15 sea?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't speak for what
17 other people did.

18 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Did you ever
19 yourself personally do a roll period estimate on the El
20 Faro?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir. Same thing.
22 It was pretty close.

23 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: How close, if you
24 recall?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: A couple seconds probably

1 to the best of my recollection.

2 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. Do you
3 recall doing it for the El Yunque or another pod class
4 vessel?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I didn't sail on the El
6 Yunque. I was port mate there only.

7 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay.

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: And the El Morro --

9 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: I'm just trying
10 to get a feel for if the, you know, the Cargo Max on
11 the El Faro was accurate to the overall tests. That's
12 all I was looking for there.

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay, to the best of my
14 knowledge it was accurate. I mean even -- what's that?

15 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: I just wondered
16 if you recall any of the times you took?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not off the top of my
18 head, no.

19 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Did you record
20 those times anywhere?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

22 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. Just
23 wondered if there's a record of them written down.
24 Would they be written in a log book or any other
25 document somewhere possibly?

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

2 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
3 That's all I have.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anyone else on the
5 phone with questions?

6 MR. STITH: Yes, this is Kevin Stith with
7 TOTE Services again. Another quick question, Captain
8 Ray. The test case procedure for Cargo Max, did you
9 ever perform those quarterly tests or annual tests
10 while you were on board?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I did and I printed
12 them out and they would have been in the stability
13 book, in the front of the stability book or the binder.

14 MR. STITH: Okay. And as you, if you can
15 recall, you know, were there any discrepancies or items
16 of note from those tests?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: None that I recall.

18 MR. STITH: Okay, thank you.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any further
20 questions on the phone? Okay. This is Mike Kucharski
21 continuing. Were you aware of any differences in how
22 any of the other chief mates that you relieved on El
23 Faro calculated stability?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you have

1 handover notes between the two of you?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, there was turnover
3 notes.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Turnover notes?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what did you do
7 with the turnover notes? Was a copy sent to the
8 office?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would send a copy to
10 the office and then usually try to e-mail it to your
11 relief ahead of time so he can look at it, you know,
12 and he wasn't just coming on to the ship and having to
13 look at it all on that one day.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And how long was
15 the turnover that you had?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It varied. Usually it
17 was four hours, maybe six hours. It all depends.
18 Different ships, different times.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Well let's talk
20 specifically about El Faro. Was it, was it same day
21 turnover?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was same day turnover,
23 yes.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you ever
25 compare the full load displacement, the maximum

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1 displacement that the vessel could carry in the trim
2 and stability book with the value you got in Cargo Max?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what did you
5 find?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It depended on what ports
7 we were in. But we would take the salinity. We would
8 use the calculated drafts versus the observed drafts.
9 Go in and look at the displacement and this is to the
10 best of my recollection, it might have been 75 tons
11 different in Port Everglades a couple hundred tons in
12 San Juan and Jacksonville.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you ever find
14 any situations where the full load displacement as per
15 the trim and stability book, as per classification was
16 exceeded?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir, not that I
18 recall.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me stop
20 there and see if there are any questions. Telephone?

21 MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith from TOTE
22 Services. Ray, you're turnover process there were you
23 describing that as captain as chief mate?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As chief mate. As
25 captain it was, the couple times I turned over the

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1 relieving captain showed up first thing in the morning
2 and we spent most of the day together.

3 MR. STITH: Okay, very good. Thank you.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
5 Kucharski. Did you know Steven Shultz?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you sail with
8 him at all?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what was his
11 capacity and what was your capacity?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He was, I sailed with him
13 twice I believe. Once on the Great Land. I can't
14 remember how long we were together, maybe a week. I
15 can't remember off the top of my head. And then he was
16 chief mate I think while I was captain on the El Faro.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So --

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: And that might be wrong
19 as well. But I have sailed with him. It's, all these
20 ships in the last few years it all blurs together.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And so he never
22 handed over to you?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He never handed over to
24 me, no.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you ever

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1 hand over to him as chief? Were you a chief mate and -
2 -

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe I did hand over
4 to him once, yes, on the El Faro.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: On the El Faro,
6 okay.

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: And I could be wrong but
8 I believe I did. There was a lot of people coming and
9 going at the end there and then I ended up moving up to
10 master so it was just busy.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: When you talk about
12 moving up to master did you have an official log book
13 on the ship?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not on the El Faro.

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So all you carried
16 was the deck log book?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Deck log book.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Do you have
19 articles on the ship?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Coastwise you don't have
21 to sign articles. You don't sign foreign articles.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Are you familiar
23 with the term coastwise articles?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Do you carry

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1 coastwise articles?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what did
4 you do with those articles?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I didn't do anything with
6 them. They, we didn't, I didn't have to fill out any
7 articles for coastwise.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Questions so
9 far? On the phone, any questions? Okay. Moving on.
10 When you were chief mate on El Faro could you tell us
11 what your overall duties were?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: To check the stability of
13 the ship after cargo was loaded. Assist the master in
14 any way necessary. And the safety equipment of the
15 vessel. That was all stuff you're supposed to
16 supervise.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you stand a
18 bridge watch?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: That was part of
21 your duties?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir, eight hours a
23 day.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when did
25 you stand the bridge watch?

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: 04:00 to 08:00 and 16:00
2 to 20:00.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: You had eight hours
4 of bridge watch then?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: At sea I suppose it
7 would be?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At sea.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you
10 participate at all in voyage planning?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not as chief mate, as
12 second mate.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay.

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Chief mate you're, you
15 know, you're plotting on the chart every day on watch
16 of course.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And so that would
18 have been second mate you said you were about three
19 weeks on the El Morro?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the El Morro, yes, I
21 believe it was the El Morro.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: But El Faro you
23 didn't serve as second mate onboard that ship?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir, chief mate and
25 master.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you look over
2 the voyage plans at all?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And when did you
5 look over them?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would always look over
7 them when I first got on a ship and before you sail
8 each port.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Were there
10 any pre-departure briefs held on the El Faro either
11 while you were master or as mate?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: When I was mate I would,
13 you know, as far as pre-departure briefs what do you
14 mean?

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were there any
16 briefs of what you're going to be, bridge roles on
17 departure, who is going to do what --

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: -- what you were
20 going to encounter on the voyage plans, passage plans,
21 anything like that?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, you would always
23 discuss who was going to be where for docking and
24 undocking and things like that. You would discuss any
25 upcoming weather if there was weather, things of that

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1 sort.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So you recollect
3 some kind of pre-departure briefs or --

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about pre-
6 arrival briefs? Did you have them?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Pre-arrival briefs would
8 be the same thing. You would be told, okay, you're on
9 the bow, you're on the stern, things like that. How
10 the ship was going to tie up. If you're coming
11 alongside the dock. If they're going to turn bow to
12 port or things like that.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So those
14 were discussed?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes, okay. And was
17 there any written type of form for the pre-departure,
18 pre-arrival?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Checklists not, nothing
20 for the brief itself. There's a pre-arrival and pre-
21 departure checklist.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any questions from
23 the room regarding anything about voyage plans or
24 briefs, pre-departure, pre-arrival briefs? How about
25 on the telephone? Okay.

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1 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: I have a question,
2 sorry. Mike Richards, NTSB. You mentioned you would
3 talk about weather I assume for the upcoming voyage.
4 How would you avail yourself of weather information
5 prior to departure?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We have a BVS weather
7 planner application onboard the vessel.

8 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Any other methods?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well in port you can
10 always look on your cell phone and see what the weather
11 is and things like that as well, look at the news.

12 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Thank you.

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Ask the pilots.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And this is
15 Mike Kucharski. We'll go in a little bit more depth in
16 BVS and the weather systems. But in generalities
17 coming back to some of your other duties, did you
18 participate or lead in monthly safety meetings?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I participated in them
20 and I led some of them, yes.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And could you tell
22 us what was generally discussed at the safety meetings?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Any Coast Guard safety
24 alerts, any thing from the company that came out as far
25 as ops memos and things like that. You would discuss

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1 onboard safety items, things crew members would bring
2 up. Previous months minutes and then you would have
3 your current discussion.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were you aware of
5 any safety alerts being sent from the company to the El
6 Faro?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Just the usual alerts. I
8 think we got one, I can't remember off the top of my
9 head. It might have been on this ship. But I think we
10 got it on that one also about the electrical outlet
11 cords right there basically saying that they can cause
12 fires and things like that.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: I'm going to stop
14 here and ask if any questions on safety meetings or
15 safety alerts?

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. You
17 mentioned the onboard safety items that crew members
18 would bring up. Were there certain things that were
19 brought up regularly?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Nothing regularly. Just
21 if say grating on one of the bays broke, door in cargo
22 ops it would come up so everybody knew and we could get
23 it fixed right away and repaired so that nobody would
24 get hurt.

25 You know, put the caution tape up so in the

1 meantime nobody got hurt until you can repair it or
2 replace it. Things like that.

3 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And did you say that you
4 led the safety meetings?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I led some of them, yes.

6 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And who led ones, when
7 you didn't lead who did?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: When Captain Axelson was
9 on board he did all the meetings himself and he did the
10 minutes. When Captain Davidson was on board usually I
11 did the minutes and the meetings.

12 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Is there a reason why it
13 was different under the different captains?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I do not know. I can't
15 speak to that. They just, that's the way they did it.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Did Captain Davidson
17 attend the safety meetings?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not at the beginning, no.
19 But eventually he started coming to the meetings.

20 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And when was that? Was
21 that just recently or --

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, well, yes, I guess
23 so. I don't recall exactly. I said something to him
24 because it's in the policy that the captains are
25 supposed to lead the safety meetings and everything.

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1 So I had made a comment to him one day that he should
2 at least be down there even if I'm doing the meetings
3 and then he started coming down.

4 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Thank you.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any questions on
6 the phone? Captain Thompson, I would like to change a
7 little bit and talk about your in port duties
8 specifically. What would you do in port, cargo watch,
9 Jacksonville? Let's concentrate on Jacksonville.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well you would be
11 responsible for watching all the cargo coming on the
12 vessel and making sure it's being lashed properly. If
13 you're going to be going in to heavy weather make sure
14 they were heavy weather lashing. They used to, I
15 believe, lash for heavy weather pretty much all the
16 time anyway just in case.

17 I think that was the way the port guys in
18 Jacksonville were doing it. And then in San Juan if
19 you were going to have heavy weather you would ask them
20 to use, you know, the extra lashings for the heavy
21 weather. And other than that the mates were usually on
22 six and six so that you can be wherever you needed to
23 be for anything.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay.

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Checking the lines,

1 things like that. And this was directed to me as chief
2 mate, correct?

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Correct. Does the
4 master have any duties cargo watch in port?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Overall you're
6 responsible for the vessel so you should be in tune
7 with what's going on, on the vessel.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Does he have any
9 specific duties? I mean he's over and in charge of the
10 engineering. Does he have engineering duties or
11 anything like that?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: But as master would
14 you go down on deck check cargo or anything like that
15 and watch cargo coming on?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You could go down, you
17 see what's going on. I mean in port usually you're
18 busy doing other things. But at sea you can go do
19 rounds, check the cargo, make sure the lashing is
20 tight, walk around the ship, look at your anchors,
21 things like that.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let's go
23 back into port itself, okay. So --

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This is in port as chief
25 mate again?

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Gil, you brought up
2 to make sure we separate that. So as master did you go
3 down there on deck and check anything on deck while
4 you, during a cargo watch? Did you have a cargo watch?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would go down and visit
6 the mates on deck not specifically looking at the
7 cargo. I mean as a chief mate I already knew what was
8 going on when I was captain with cargo. So --

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, okay. So as
10 chief mate you watched the cargo come on and you
11 checked, you looked at lashings?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir. Checked
13 lashings, you as well as the other mates.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And if you
15 saw any lashing type of problems what would you do?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You notify the foreman
17 that was on each level. In Jacksonville on the second
18 deck, third deck and the fourth deck they each had
19 their own foreman. You would go talk to him and he
20 would correct it or fix it.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Foreman for?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: For lashing for the
23 cargo.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was that a portis
25 (phonetic) person?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And the
3 lashings themselves, any problems with the lashings?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No. They were greased
5 and maintained on a regular basis. Any that were not
6 working properly we would take out of service and send
7 shore side and they would repair them and get them back
8 to us.

9 We had plenty of lashing on the ship
10 usually. We had extra lashing actually.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you test the
12 buttons and D-rings in any way?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you ever see
15 any of those fail?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about on the El
18 Morro? Did any fail on the El Morro?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I have never seen any
20 fail.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were you in any
22 rough seas on either ship?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I recall, not
24 rough.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What was the

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1 highest sea that you saw on either ship?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't know. Maybe
3 eight to ten feet.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Eight to ten feet,
5 okay.

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Nothing major.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Were you
8 aware of any program to test the buttons or D-rings?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was not, not to the
10 best of my recollection.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Going back
12 to in port duties after cargo was finished in port, I
13 say when cargo is finished after they loaded everything
14 on, you know, the longshoreman left did you have any
15 duties or did you perform any checks after that?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As far as what exactly?

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: In port duties.

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At the end of cargo when
19 everybody was gone we would basically go get the drafts
20 and we would come back up. We would lift up the
21 gangway and you would go fore and aft.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Was there
23 any check made of watertight doors?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, watertight doors
25 were always checked.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was that part of
2 your in port duties?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That was part of the in
4 port duties, yes. You would go verify all the doors
5 are closed on the panel and then boatswain (phonetic)
6 usually would go around go around doing the stowaway
7 search and he would close all the scuttles.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: It was the
9 boatswain's responsibility to go ahead and check it.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, he was part of the
11 search, stowaway search team. So they would go do
12 their searches and then they would secure the scuttles.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about any of
14 the small watertight doors on the house or back aft?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They were always to be
16 kept closed at sea. So you would close them.
17 Sometimes people would open them and forget to close
18 them. You would go see it and close it.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So this is mainly
20 talking about the second deck where you have watertight
21 doors, I believe, going --

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Into cargo hold five and
23 down into cargo hold three those would always, we would
24 close them.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. But

1 sometimes you would find them opened?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Every once and a while.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about the, on
4 the, from the second deck to the main deck forward part
5 of the house, after part of the house there were doors
6 leading into the (inaudible) lee area?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Second deck to the main
8 deck going up the ladder well?

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They would be kept closed
11 in port. They were supposed to be because it's part of
12 the security plan. It's access to the engine room.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about at sea?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At sea they were to be
15 kept closed as well.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me
17 rephrase that. They were supposed to be kept closed.
18 Did you see the doors open at any time?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: A few times, yes. If I
20 saw them I would close them.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was any of that
22 addressed in safety meetings?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, it was. The
24 watertight integrity of the ship was probably brought
25 up at least almost every safety meeting. You know,

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1 make sure you're closing the watertight doors and, you
2 know, things like that.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. How about
4 when the ship departed port put to sea, were there any
5 checks made of it the lashings or watertight doors?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: After we would get
7 underway the next morning you would go around check all
8 the lashing for tightness again, pick up any lose
9 lashing and clear it out of the way so it wasn't a
10 safety hazard. And while you're doing that you're
11 checking, you know, the scuttles, watertight doors.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you enter into
13 the cargo hold to check lashings?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At sea?

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes.

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How did you get
18 into the cargo hold?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would open one of the
20 scuttles and go down into the cargo hold. We were in
21 the process of calling on the radio or we would let
22 somebody know, you know, that you're going down in
23 there. So and if something happened to you they would
24 know where to go look for you.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So is that

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1 reported to the bridge when you open up the scuttle?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Sometimes, yes,
3 sometimes, no.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was it reported
5 when you finished for the day and closed all the
6 scuttles?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, you would, I would
8 be doing it sometimes so I would know it was closed. I
9 mean I wouldn't report it to the bridge but I knew
10 myself they would be closed.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay.

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Usually I would go up to
13 the bridge because you're logging your cargo hold
14 inspection entry and so they would see me up there
15 anyway and know that the inspection was completed.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: When you were
17 sailing master on the ships did you walk, do walkabouts
18 on the deck --

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I did.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: -- at sea? Yes,
21 and during those two did you see any of the watertight
22 doors, those ones I had mentioned back in number five
23 hold or going up to the house?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't recall if it was
25 as master or as chief mate but I have seen the doors

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1 open and like I said I have secured them.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were you on board
3 when they had the riding crews onboard?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was on board when they
5 had an engineer contractor and I want to say a couple
6 of JMR workers possibly. I can't recall exactly but I
7 was not onboard with the Polish riders.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me stop
9 there and see if there are any questions on watertight
10 doors and closures and scuttles. Carrie.

11 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. You
12 mentioned a panel. Is that a panel that indicates when
13 doors are opened and closed, watertight doors?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It indicated the
15 watertight doors for the holds, yes.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And was that, where was
17 that located?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was in the fire
19 control room. We called it the fire control room.

20 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Did you use that to
21 check the watertight doors on a regular basis?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would use that, yes.

23 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Is there another panel
24 somewhere else that would have that information?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No. There was that one

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1 panel as far as I recall in the fire control room and
2 then, you know, other than that the only way you would
3 know is if you're walking around the decks and see
4 everything visually.

5 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So did someone check
6 that panel regularly?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was checked every time
8 before we sailed.

9 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay, thank you.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You had to make sure all
11 the doors were secured.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
13 Kucharski. Did the large watertight doors, were they
14 ever opened at sea?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Down in the cargo holds
16 once in a while they would be open at sea.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And why were they
18 opened?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: If you were doing a
20 repair to a flap or something like that if there was a
21 broken flap or something that needed to be welded you
22 might open it a few feet, do the repair and then
23 resecure it.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: On the phone are
25 there any questions about scuttles, watertight doors?

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1 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: This is Jon
2 Furukawa, NTSB. Captain Thompson, when you did open
3 the watertight doors at sea would that be logged in
4 your log book?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't believe it was.

6 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. That's all
7 for me.

8 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
9 Guard. As far as the panel in the fire control room
10 was that just for the watertight doors and not for the
11 scuttles?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Just the watertight
13 doors, sir, not the scuttles.

14 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch from
15 TOTE Services. Could you tell just by walking by the
16 scuttle whether it was locked?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would have to grab
18 the handle of it and see if it was locked or unlocked.

19 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: So it wasn't spring
20 loaded?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The, no, you would, there
22 was a round handle you would turn to lock and unlock
23 the scuttles to the best of my recollection. I mean
24 there was the three different ships, you know. So --

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: The three different

1 ones you're talking about El Morro, El Faro and Great
2 Land?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, well, four then El
4 Yunque with port meeting. You know, you go up and down
5 through the scuttles. They're always kept open in port
6 and then you would secure them, you know, once cargo
7 ops were done and you did your stowaway searches that
8 way you're not closing somebody down inside the hole.

9 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Number three hold
10 specifically, how many scuttles were there to your
11 number three hold?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That I don't recall
13 exactly. It's, being on the three different ships
14 it's, I know one ship had them on one side. One ship
15 had them on both sides.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How would that
17 scuttle pop open? How could it pop open? Are they
18 fairly heavy?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They had a good weight to
20 them. If it was closed right it shouldn't pop open.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about if the
22 wheel wasn't turned? Would it be easy to pop one of
23 those scuttles open?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that easy.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What would you

1 guesstimate the weight to be?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't know. You're
3 asking me to guess. I mean it was a good weight. You
4 would have to, you know, when you close it, it would
5 want to go on you.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Some of these
7 questions we heard one of the scuttles popped open and
8 I'm just trying to visualize for the record.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I have never seen one pop
10 open on its own.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any
12 questions relating, further questions? Otherwise how
13 about stability related questions, anything on the
14 phone you gents would like to ask before we move into
15 weather related questions?

16 Okay. Jon, Eric, you still there?

17 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: I'm still here.
18 I had just one question. Captain, and you may have
19 answered this and I apologize. Was there a typical
20 list on the El Faro that you recall that were port or
21 starboard and what was done to correct it if so?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Was there what?

23 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Was there a
24 typical list (inaudible), you know, at departure did it
25 list a certain way and the way they are listed a

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1 certain way to right all this a certain way on the El
2 Faro to your recollection and if so what was done to
3 correct it?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't recall off the
5 top of my head. But I know if we had a list we would
6 use the ramp tanks, as we call them, to correct the
7 list.

8 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay, thank you.
9 And the other thing is are you familiar with the trim
10 and stability booklet?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I'd have to look at it
12 again.

13 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: For the El Faro I
14 guess to the best of your recollection were you aware
15 of any limitations in the trim and stability booklet.
16 In other words persons fill tanks, loading of
17 (inaudible) decks.

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would have to review it
19 again. I've been looking at one for the new ship
20 recently so I'm, I'd have to review it.

21 INVESTIGATOR STOLZENBERG: Okay. That's
22 fine. Thank you. That's all I have at the moment.
23 Thank you.

24 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: And, Mike, this is
25 Jon Furukawa. I don't have any questions.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I have no
2 further questions I may come back with one more
3 stability question. But I'd like to move on to weather
4 related questions, Captain Thompson. Did the ship have
5 internet access at sea?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At sea, no.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, so no one
8 onboard had internet access?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I know of.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did the, when you
11 were sailing as chief mate on El Faro, did you have any
12 weather related duties while you were sailing as chief
13 mate standing at bridge watch?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: To monitor the weather,
15 yes.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Could you
17 explain what you mean by monitoring the weather?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well we would log the
19 weather in the deck log if it was force five and/or
20 greater. And you would load the BVS weather into the
21 application and look at that. It came in every six
22 hours, I believe.

23 And, you know, then if you were on watch
24 during the time of a synoptic weather report you would
25 be sending a weather report to NOAA.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. The weather
2 that you loaded up from the BVS weather, did that come
3 in directly to the bridge?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: To the best of my
5 recollection it went to the, on that ship to the
6 captain's office and then the captain would forward it
7 up to the bridge.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did any
9 weather come in on your 04:00 to 08:00 watch in the
10 morning?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe it has at
12 times, yes.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So it was dependent
14 on the captain sending it up to the bridge, forwarding
15 it along to the bridge?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On that ship I'm pretty
17 sure it was, yes. Right now it comes in automatically
18 to the bridge and the captain at the same time. So
19 it's --

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Right now on --

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the Isla Bella.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Isla Bella.

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I could be confused
24 about the other ship but I believe it went to the
25 captain's office and he would forward it to the bridge.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did the vessel have
2 a barometer, wind vane, anemometer?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It had a barometer. I
4 had an anemometer. I don't recall a wind vane. Yes,
5 it had the bar graph. It had all that.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And I believe you
7 said you had, was it almost a year sailing on the El
8 Faro?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Approximately, to the
10 best of my recollection.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And it was
12 about two years you were on the original breakout crew
13 for the El Faro?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was, what do you mean
15 two years on the original breakout crew?

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Well, no, the, you
17 said about two years ago was when the ship came out of
18 breakout?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would have to look at
20 my discharges, but approximately.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Approximately two
22 years, yes.

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've been with the
24 company for, well since the El Morro I think I've been
25 with the company for about two years. So it would have

1 been about a year then for the El Faro. Maybe a year
2 and --

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And all your time
4 on the El Faro as chief mate and master, did the
5 anemometer and the wind vane work all that time?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: While I was there it
7 worked. I believe we had two if I recall correctly.
8 One on the port side didn't work and the one on the
9 starboard side did work. And I might have the ships
10 mixed up but I believe there was two on that ship and I
11 know that we had a working anemometer or wind vane.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what did this
13 working anemometer look like?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We had, it was a black
15 digital display box. It would tell you if the wind was
16 coming off the port bow or the starboard bow and then
17 you had up on the flying bridge, I don't know how you
18 want to call it the little bird with the propeller that
19 would be in the wind.

20 And you could take that and put it into your
21 program and figure out your apparent wind from true
22 wind and things like that.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And you came
24 off of the El Faro, the last time you were on again
25 that was in August?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: August 14th or 16th. I
2 can't recall the exact date but it was August.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And when you came
4 off of it you were chief mate or you were master?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was captain.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did the second mate
7 ever report to you that the anemometers did not work or
8 the anemometer did not work?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was never reported.
10 It hadn't been working for a while. They reported it.
11 They tried to fix it, to the best of my recollection.
12 And because we had one working they, I can't remember
13 if they ordered parts for the other one or not to be
14 exact.

15 I just know we had one working and they were
16 comfortable with that so --

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I'll stop
18 there and see if there are any questions. Around the
19 room?

20 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Weather related
21 questions? I have some weather related questions.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: There's going to be
23 a lot of weather questions, but specifically about the
24 anemometer or the wind vane.

25 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Yes. The black

1 display, digital display, this was on the bridge?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

3 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. Did it
4 provide gust information?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, it would give 35
6 knots, 40 knots, 50 knots. It would give you a number.

7 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. So it would
8 give you, would it give you sustained wind?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't know if it was
10 sustained wind. It was basically, you know, if the
11 wind would gust up it would show you 60 knots and I
12 guess, yes, sustained wind if you were just regular.

13 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay, thank you.
14 And this is Mike Richards, NTSB, sorry.

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Can you tell
16 us about the weather data that came in to the El Faro,
17 weather data that was available for the, either the
18 master or the watch officers weather information, how
19 it came in, in what form?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would get the BVS
21 file and you would take it and load it into the BVS
22 application and you could get the weather that way. If
23 there was any major weather I believe it was the SATC
24 would alarm and it would print out a weather report.
25 You can get weather off the NAVTEX.

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1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. And the SATC
2 and the NAVTEX, could you tell us what form that
3 weather was in?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was a printout
5 basically a big roll of paper on the SATCs and it would
6 print out the weather and then the NAVTEX was a smaller
7 roll of paper and it would print out buoys weather, you
8 know, lights out on buoys, boats adrift or something,
9 things like that, any pertinent information you might
10 need.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So you had
12 BVS weather. You had NAVTEX.

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: You had SATC
15 weather. Any broadcast weather, VHF or --

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well you can get the
17 Weather Channel on the VHF when you're in port and you
18 can still pick it up.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Could you pick any
20 VHF weather along the route?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I, actually I never
22 tried.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What about
24 facsimile (phonetic) maps?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't recall on that

1 ship if we had that or not with all the different ships
2 it's, I know we have it now. I can't remember if there
3 was one over there.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Questions about
5 gathering the weather information?

6 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Along the normal
7 route, Mike Richards, NTSB. Along the normal route
8 between Jacksonville and Puerto Rico you talked about
9 SATC, NAVTEX, being e-mailed weather files for BVS.
10 Did you recognize, were there any dead areas for
11 communications for any of these?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I noticed.

13 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. You said that
14 the e-mail system, can you describe the e-mail system
15 that was on board the El Faro, how that worked?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I believe it was the
17 Globe System. E-mail would come and go every certain
18 amount of hours, however it was set up. I can't recall
19 exactly what the hours were on that ship.

20 And you would get e-mail the chief mates, I
21 think the top four will have e-mail access and there
22 was an e-mail terminal for the crew and then there was
23 one on the bridge was a laptop that had e-mail access.
24 So if you were taking arrival or departure on the
25 bridge you would send the report down to the captain

1 and the chief via the e-mail and then they would take,
2 you know, the chief would put his numbers in.

3 The captain would then send it off to the
4 office and the company, things like that. Internal e-
5 mail would come and go. If it was the weather coming
6 in you would get it and like I said you would send it
7 up to the bridge.

8 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: If you sent, if you
9 wanted to send an e-mail to someone back on shore was
10 that system a different system than an e-mail you would
11 send to the captain or the bridge?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On that ship, to the best
13 of my recollection it's the same system except there
14 was like a vessel, at vessel and then the other one was
15 at globe and (inaudible) or at globe e-mail.com or
16 whatever.

17 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: So you had mentioned
18 that the captain would need to send you the BVS file
19 once he had received it in his account. Correct me if
20 I'm wrong. He would need to send it up to the bridge?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On that ship to the best
22 of my recollection, yes, sir.

23 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. And this
24 would be via the same e-mail system that one would e-
25 mail someone back on shore?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

2 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. Did those e-
3 mails disseminate instantaneously or did it require --

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Ship internally it was
5 instantaneous on that ship. You would send it and they
6 would go up to the bridge. Shore side it would take
7 longer because it was whenever the e-mail system was
8 set up to push the mail.

9 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Did you or anyone
10 else besides the captain have access to the e-mail
11 account that the BVS files were e-mailed to?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not when I was chief
13 mate. When I was captain you would receive the files.

14 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. As chief mate
15 you did not have access?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

17 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: As captain you did?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As captain you would get
19 the BVS files. As chief mate you would not unless you
20 were on watch on the bridge and the captain sent it up
21 to you.

22 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Thank you.

23 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. I
24 just have a follow up question to Mike's question. Did
25 you ever have a time when you were waiting for that

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1 information and you had to specifically request the
2 captain send the weather data to you?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, ma'am. Not that I
4 recall.

5 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Thank you.

6 MR. [REDACTED] I have some setting questions.
7 Is this an appropriate time?

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: I think so. Are
9 there any questions on the phone so far from what we've
10 asked about weather related data or information coming
11 in?

12 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Yes, Jon Furukawa,
13 NTSB. Captain, I think I heard you say that you got
14 off the El Faro in August?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

16 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: And were you serving
17 as master or chief mate?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Both. When I got off I
19 was relieved as master and then prior to that I was
20 chief mate.

21 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And that was
22 your one month as master on the El Faro?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, I think that time I
24 only did a week. I can't recall exactly the dates but
25 that was only one week. The one captain resigned and I

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1 basically moved up to fill in until Captain Davidson
2 came back.

3 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So prior to
4 that you were serving as chief mate for about a year on
5 the El Faro?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Approximately.

7 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So the
8 anemometer, you said that there were two of them. One
9 was out of commission and the other one was working?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, to the best of my
11 recollection there was two and the display for the port
12 one was not working and the display for the starboard,
13 the one on the starboard flying bridge was working.

14 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. It was only
15 the display. It wasn't the actual anemometer itself
16 that was out of commission?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That's hard to say. I
18 don't know if it was because the wind thing on the
19 flying bridge wasn't working and that it wasn't getting
20 a proper signal or not.

21 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So the
22 display for the port anemometer, that's the anemometer
23 itself is on the port flying bridge. Is that what you
24 said?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, to the best of my

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1 recollection on that ship they had one on the port side
2 and one on the starboard side and the port one was not
3 working and the starboard was working. I could have
4 that backwards but I believe it was the starboard one
5 that was working and the starboard display.

6 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And for the
7 starboard display where's that anemometer located?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was on the, to the
9 best of my recollection it was on the flying bridge on
10 the starboard side.

11 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So both
12 anemometers were on the flying bridge?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

14 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And to your
15 recollection, the best of your recollection about how
16 long has the port --

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Excuse me.

18 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: -- display or the
19 port anemometer been out of commission?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I do not recall exactly
21 how long it was out of commission.

22 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. That's all I
23 have. Thank you very much.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
25 Kucharski. Were you on board the El Faro when they put

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1 the BVS system onboard?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't recall that. I
3 mean I don't know when they put it on. I wasn't
4 captain when it was installed so I don't recall.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Who had
6 control of the settings to the computer, to change any
7 of the settings on the computer, the BVS computer?

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It wasn't a computer. It
9 was an app. It's on the regular captain's computer in
10 his office.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Who had
12 control of changing the settings on the app?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well the captain did. He
14 put in whatever he wanted, whatever route, draft,
15 things like that, whatever he wanted.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And how about
17 changes to the amount of information you got from BVS?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Explain?

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Time. Could you
20 get them to come in every hour if you wanted to?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That I do not know.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you talk to
23 anybody at TOTE regarding set up of that computer or
24 working that computer?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I have not personally,

1 no.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Do you ever look at
3 the manual to the BVS?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've reviewed the manual.
5 I would have to look at it again, I mean to recall.
6 But I've looked at it.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you ever talk
8 to anybody at BVS on the phone?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Through e-mail once,
10 never on the phone.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what was the
12 nature of the conversation or the e-mail?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I believe we, the file
14 wasn't able to upload for some reason. So we just sent
15 a message saying we couldn't upload it on the one
16 computer. If I recall correctly, they sent us a
17 network key or something.

18 It was called a plug in and then the program
19 was working fine again.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you change any
21 of the settings on the computer?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Me personally, no. When
23 I was captain I would put in on the program what I
24 wanted to see as far as routes and tracks and things
25 like that. Enter our departure times for the route,

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1 when I wanted to arrive because it would give you
2 speeds required and things like that.

3 You can change it so it shows, you know,
4 wind, currents, waves, different things. It depended
5 on how you wanted to look at it, what you wanted to
6 see.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were there any, but
8 you didn't make any changes to any of the settings? I
9 think you already said that, correct?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Correct. No changes to
11 the settings itself. And as far as settings you're
12 talking about when you set the program up and you input
13 the vessel information?

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes, that and then
15 when you can download information, what information.

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I made no changes to
17 any of that, sir.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were you aware of
19 any discussions, well let me stop and ask are there any
20 questions specifically on BVS and the use of BVS?

21 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB.
22 Did you receive any formal training on the use of BVS?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Formal training, no, sir.

24 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. Did you
25 receive any type of training?

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1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

2 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: How many instances
3 of BVS were onboard the El Faro?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On how many computers are
5 you asking?

6 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Yes, sir.

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was on the bridge and
8 the master's computer, to the best of my knowledge.

9 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. Mike, I have
10 a version of BVS just up here on my computer. I would
11 like to show --

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Sure. And would
13 you, you have a version of BVS would you also come
14 around and explain so on the recording we know what
15 you're actually showing here.

16 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Sure. So I've got a
17 version of the Bon Voyage, BVS system running on this
18 laptop right now. I'm going to show you, I'm going to
19 go up to the help setting or the help tab, click about
20 and this shows that this is Version 7.0.0.78 right
21 here. Does this look like the version of BVS that was
22 on board any or all of the computers on El Faro when
23 you were on El Faro?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't believe it was
25 this recent of a version to the best of my

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1 recollection.

2 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. What were,
3 can you describe any -- and you can play around with
4 this if you would like, any of the material differences
5 between this version I'm showing you and the version
6 that was, you were familiar with on board El Faro?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It looks similar.

8 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: I should but I don't
9 have any weather data loaded into this.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, this is, it's
11 different than the one that was on the El Faro, to the
12 best of my recollection.

13 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. All right,
14 thank you. Did you or any of the officers ever plot
15 tropical cyclone current and forecast position by hand?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the charts, yes.

17 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: What was the source
18 of the information that you used to plot those?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was either BVS or the
20 SATC where they'll give you positions and estimated
21 positions for six, 12 or 18 hours later and you would
22 plot those on the charts.

23 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Did you ever compare
24 the two tracks, one provided by SATC and the other
25 provided by BVS?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Occasionally, yes, you
2 would, you know, I mean you would look at the BVS and
3 see how close it was to the hand plotting.

4 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: How close did you
5 find those two to be?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't give you an exact
7 number off the top of my head. They were fairly
8 accurate. BVS is, in my opinion, a very accurate
9 weather program. I mean just coming back on the Isla
10 Bella the other night we came Old Bahama Channel
11 because I saw five meter seas on the BVS weather
12 program.

13 And then when we were coming through Old
14 Bahama Channel basically all the weather was matching
15 up to what BVS had as far as the winds and the
16 directions and things like that. It's a pretty
17 accurate program.

18 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Thank you.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
20 Kucharski. You mentioned five meter seas. Was five
21 meter seas a concern?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: For me it is on the Isla
23 Bella because when we come back from San Juan we're
24 late and she rolls. So, you know, there's no reason to
25 go through that if you don't have to if you can go a

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1 different route.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What about the El
3 Faro?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The El Faro, same thing
5 if I was captain on there I would probably go Old
6 Bahama Channel as well. I wouldn't want to put the
7 ship through any unnecessary wear and tear.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: For a five meter
9 sea then that would be --

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, that's 15, 16 foot
11 seas and depending on where they're coming from the
12 beam or wherever it's not worth it.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: What's the
14 difference between the beam and somewhere else? Could
15 you --

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well if it's coming from
17 dead ahead you can adjust speed to reduce pounding and
18 things like that, it won't, it might not affect you as
19 bad as if it's coming on the side of the ship, port or
20 starboard side. You're going to roll a lot more and
21 things like that.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about on the
23 quarter?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the quarter, same
25 thing. If I remember correctly those ships had a

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1 tendency to roll, you know, when the swell was coming
2 off the quarter.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. You
4 mentioned that you had occasion to use the Old Bahama
5 Channel. That was on, was that on the Isla Bella?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I just used it
7 coming back.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you use it on
9 the El Faro or the El Morro?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I never had reason to.
11 The weather was always fairly calm.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were there any
13 voyage plans on the, preprinted ones for using weather
14 routes other than your normal route?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: We had a, to the best of
16 my recollection we had a route for the Northeast
17 Providence Channel as well the Old Bahama Channel, both
18 to San Juan and from San Juan back to Jacksonville.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anything for the
20 Yucatan Channel?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I recall.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski.
23 Any questions regarding those different weather routes?
24 Was there anyone during your time on the El Faro that
25 you talked to at the offices and I apologize if I've

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1 asked this, regarding the weather service or BVS?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the El Faro, no.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So there were no
4 discussions about using weather routing or anything
5 like that?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As far as talking to
7 somebody from the company?

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir. I never
10 experienced bad weather over there to have to call
11 somebody and ask a question.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I don't
13 think I have any other weather related questions.
14 Anybody around the table have weather?

15 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
16 Guard. Just a follow up on something you said earlier
17 about the settings. You said the master could change
18 the settings. Were you talking about on --

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I'm talking about the
20 track lines, if you want to see waves, wind, things
21 like that, you know. I wasn't talking about the main
22 settings of the program itself.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: But just the courses you
25 put in, the wave points, things like that.

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1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So are you saying that
2 only the master could change those or --

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, you can do it on the
4 bridge as well, you know, if you were on the bridge
5 computer. You can set it up the way you liked to look
6 at it, what you wanted to stand out you could make
7 stand out.

8 You can turn the wind flags off, turn the
9 wind flags on, things like that.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Perfect. Are you aware of the
11 other settings as far as delivery, schedule and things
12 like that or did you, did we already ask that question?
13 Are you aware of the ability to change when the data
14 package is received from BVS?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I am not aware of that.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

17 MALE PARTICIPANT: We're at about an hour
18 forty. Could we take five minutes?

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes, I think we're
20 probably going to wrap up in the next ten or 15
21 minutes.

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I'll take a break.
23 I need to use the head anyway. Thanks.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Sure. It's 17:33.
25 We'll stop the recording.

1 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
2 off the record at 7:33 p.m. and resumed at 7:43 p.m.)

3 (End of Audio Part 1)

4 (Start of Audio Part 2)

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, gents on the
6 phone. We're ready to restart and the time is 17:43.
7 We're ready to resume Captain Thompson's interview.
8 And I believe we have a question.

9 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Yes. Mike Richards,
10 NTSB. During the break I realized I just wanted to
11 clarify one of the answers you gave on the questions
12 that I asked.

13 When we asked, when you indicated you had
14 not received any training on BVS program, was that
15 specific to, was that regarding your time on the El
16 Faro or was that, have you at any time during your
17 employment with TOTE received training on BVS?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not formal training, no,
19 sir.

20 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay. Are you aware
21 of any formal training that's been provided to any of
22 your colleagues at TOTE?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I can't speak for that.
24 I don't know.

25 INVESTIGATOR RICHARDS: Okay, thank you.

1 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Mike
2 Kucharski. I'd like to be absolutely dead sure about
3 this because Mr. Beard (phonetic) said that there was
4 no working anemometer on the El Faro.

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I'm pretty sure the
6 starboard one worked.

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So there --

8 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: To the best of my
9 knowledge.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any further
11 weather questions, weather related questions?

12 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I have one, I think.
13 Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE Services. You can let me know
14 if this is the time to ask. You said that when you
15 were on the Isla Bella on this last trip you went, you
16 came back via the Old Bahama --

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Old Bahama Channel, yes.

18 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Did anyone at TOTE
19 Maritime have any issues with you taking the longer
20 route back?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, ma'am.

22 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: At any time did TOTE, did
23 you ever on any of your other vessels take a different
24 route than the normal?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the other ship it was

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1 just the normal route and on this one I just recently
2 took Old Bahama Channel. I sent a message out to, I
3 believe it was Jeppesen Weather Routing and asked them
4 for advice.

5 They had told me to take the normal route
6 and I chose to take Old Bahama Channel anyway because
7 what they had differed from what BVS was saying a
8 little bit and I just wanted to err on the side of
9 safety and caution. And nobody questioned me on it at
10 all.

11 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: On any of your other
12 voyages whenever you sailed on any of the other ships,
13 if at any time someone took a weather precaution did
14 anyone from TOTE Maritime make any comments?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, ma'am, never, never.

16 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay, thank you.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: This is Mike
18 Kucharski. Did you report this change in the track
19 that you took shore side to anyone?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Who did you report
22 that to?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On the Isla Bella?

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes.

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I sent a message to the

1 weather routing people and cc'd, I believe Phil Morrell
2 and a couple other people in the office. And the reply
3 I got back was thank you and let us know what you
4 decide. And then in the end I decided to take Old
5 Bahama Channel.

6 So I sent my departure message saying that
7 we're taking Old Bahama Channel. Departure message
8 goes out to you name it, pretty much everybody gets it.
9 And there wasn't one comment back from anybody asking
10 why I was going I was going that way or anything.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Who is your direct
12 report at the company?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well we go through, every
14 e-mail goes through multiple people. You go through
15 the port engineers, Phil Morrell who is director of
16 ops. So every e-mail is cc'd to multiple people. John
17 Lawrence is our designated person ashore.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you have any
19 port captain to talk to or anybody ashore regarding
20 nautical, pure nautical issues?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You can talk to the
22 people in the company that have sailed as captain
23 before. You can talk to the weather routing people.
24 Most of them are retired captains that are now working
25 for that weather routing service. I believe they

1 mostly employ retired captains in that Jeppesen one of
2 VOS, whatever it is. I can't remember the exact name
3 of it.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How about other
5 nautical, pure nautical navigation type issues, did you
6 ever interface with anyone at TOTE shore side, TOTE?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've never had to.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: You bring up
9 Jeppesen. Is Jeppesen a different service from BVS?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: And what did you
12 utilize them for?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I wanted to see what
14 their comments were about the routes I was looking at
15 taking back due to the weather I saw on BVS. So I sent
16 them an e-mail and I attached a PDF of the route and
17 then they asked for it in an Excel format so they can
18 input it into whatever system they use and then they
19 gave me information back.

20 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: How did you know to
21 use Jeppesen?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was on board the ship
23 and we have access to it so it's a, as far as I know
24 right now I don't think we pay for it or anything.
25 It's just a service that they're giving us feedback on

1 when we ask.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: A separate system.

3 Did you go --

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Separate from BVS, yes.

5 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Separate from BVS.

6 Did you ask the same information of BVS?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I didn't e-mail them, no.

8 I just used what their latest weather reports were that
9 we would upload into the program.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. More
11 questions on weather, Carrie?

12 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Yes. Carrie Bell, NTSB.
13 You mentioned a departure message that you sent out.
14 What is included in that?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You've got your departure
16 position, your fuel figures, distance, things like
17 that. It's basically a message that at departure you
18 send out, at noon you send out every day and at
19 arrival. And each one you just add more information to
20 it.

21 When you arrive you add finished with
22 engines, last line, things like that, pilot on board.
23 When you're at sea for the regular noon report you have
24 your position, your fresh water on board, fuel
25 consumption, fuel on board, distance run, distance to

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1 go or total distance I think it is, hours for the day
2 and then total hours for the voyage so far. Things
3 like, of that nature.

4 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Does it include any
5 route information?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Route information not
7 unless you type it in, in the message itself.

8 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Is that typical to type
9 that in?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I'm doing it right now.
11 I mean if we're taking the regular route I don't advise
12 anybody because it's the regular route. If I'm going
13 to deviate from the regular route then I will tell them
14 we're going to take either Old Bahama Channel or
15 Northeast Providence Channel or something like that.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So if you're deviating
17 from the route and you're putting that in the notes are
18 you expecting a response? Is this informational or are
19 you seeking approval?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well this is the first
21 time I've ever done it. So I sent out a message
22 basically saying I was planning on taking the Old
23 Bahama Channel just so that people knew and, you know,
24 that I might not be taking the regular route.

25 And, you know, like I said I got a message

1 back saying okay, let us know what you decide.

2 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So that's basically just
3 informational or is that --

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I was sending it out for
5 informational just so they knew I was considering it,
6 yes.

7 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. And so you're not
8 waiting on a response from them?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, no.

10 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay, thank you.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.
12 Captain, in these messages when you took Old Bahama
13 Channel that you sent ashore, do you recall if anyone
14 such as Phil Morrell or anybody else said anything in
15 language such as concur with your assessment or was it
16 a simple thank you?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was just a thank you.
18 Let us know what your decision is, as far as I recall.
19 I would have to go read the e-mail word for word.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

22 MR. [REDACTED] with the Coast
23 Guard. A little bit ago you said you would e-mail the
24 weather people or your weather routing people. Can you
25 explain in more detail who that is, what e-mail

1 address?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was, I believe it was,
3 it's a support e-mail at Jeppesen I believe. And then
4 I would cc people in the office on it as well just so
5 that I could see that I was requesting information.

6 And there I, to the best of my recollection
7 wrote something like can you please look at the two
8 intended tracks and compare them. And they sent me
9 weather and said the best track would be to do this and
10 based on this, this and this and fuel consumption and
11 things like that.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Anyone on the phone
13 have any questions?

14 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.
15 Captain, when you said that you took the Old Bahama
16 Channel contrary to what Jeppesen said, what ship was
17 this on?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This is on the Isla
19 Bella. And Jeppesen had said to go the regular route
20 because of fuel consumption and they were expecting I
21 think it was, I'd have to read the message, but I think
22 it was three point something meter seas maximum.

23 However, BVS was showing a maximum of 4.8 to
24 5 meter seas along that route. So I chose to go Old
25 Bahama Channel.

1 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. When was
2 this?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This was just the other
4 day. We sailed, I guess it was the fourth or the third
5 from San Juan and we just arrived this afternoon at
6 14:00.

7 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So that was
8 this past voyage?

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

10 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: And what was the
11 name of the storm that you took this avoiding action?
12 Is it a named storm?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: What's that?

14 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: The weather system
15 that you took the avoiding action, is it a named storm?

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, it was just five
17 meter seas and being that we have, you know, basically
18 an empty ship, not much weight cargo wise I didn't want
19 to subject the ship to any excessive rolling or
20 anything like that going through those kind of seas.

21 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And this was
22 on the Isla Bella, correct?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Isla Bella, yes, sir.

24 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you.
25 That's all I have.

1 MR. [REDACTED] I have a follow up, Captain.
2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard. Your voyage plan,
3 you were leaving San Diego with a light ship, unusual
4 conditions?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Explain unusual
6 conditions.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Well I mean well normally you
8 would, you know, move cargo on a ship. In this case --

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, and in most cases
10 you go from port to port with a full ship. And you're
11 referring to leaving San Diego coming back to
12 Jacksonville or --

13 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, well on this voyage you
14 just completed.

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: This voyage was not
16 leaving San Diego. This was leaving San Juan.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So let's go to the San
18 Diego transit coming to the new port at Jacksonville.
19 That's the one I'm referring to. I'm sorry.

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay.

21 MR. [REDACTED] You're transcending the Panama
22 Cannel which is not typical for the ship, correct?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well, correct.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. When you set up that
25 voyage plan that was a greatly different voyage plan

1 than you typically set up, correct?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It's a voyage plan. I
3 mean you're putting wave points on the charts. You're
4 plotting your lines and courses. It's like most voyage
5 plans whether you're going from San Diego to Panama or
6 from Jacksonville to San Juan.

7 It's, there's a process you do for the
8 voyage plans. Usually you lay everything out on the
9 charts, draw your track lines in. Make sure you're not
10 going over something you shouldn't be going over or
11 going in an area that's a dangerous area or something
12 you would consider a go or a no go area, things like
13 that.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. For the voyage from San
15 Diego to Jacksonville, did anybody within TOTE's
16 organization validate that voyage plan?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not to my recollection.
18 The captain looked at it as well as myself, the second
19 mate and the third mate prior to sailing. We all
20 looked at the voyage plan. Everybody was involved with
21 it that was on board the vessel.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So did anyone at TOTE,
23 did you transmit that complete voyage plan because it
24 included going through the Panama Canal, that type of
25 information?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That I don't know. I was
2 chief mate. I wasn't captain for that trip so I don't
3 know if it was, if something like that was it wasn't
4 sent.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. If there are
7 no further weather questions, anyone on the phone have
8 any? Okay. I would like to move on. How was your
9 relationship, how would you characterize your
10 relationship with Captain Davidson?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It was good.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you find
13 him open to challenging any kind of his decisions?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've never had to
15 challenge him on anything other than when I talked to
16 him about the safety meetings and then he eventually
17 started coming down to the safety meetings.

18 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So if you didn't
19 like some kind of a decision he came out with or came
20 up with you wouldn't feel that would be a problem
21 bringing it to his attention?

22 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would bring that to
23 anybody's attention not just his. I mean --

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Questions, Carrie.

25 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. Can

1 you talk about Captain Davidson's leadership style just
2 in general?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Opinion or?

4 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Your opinion, your
5 experience working with him.

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: What are you looking for?

7 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Was he laid back,
8 assertive, what kind of --

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I guess it would depend
10 on the situation.

11 INVESTIGATOR BELL: In general, in that
12 general working environment how was the, how was his
13 attitude toward everyone? Just a general environment
14 was it laid back, was it --

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He was a regular person.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. Would you say
17 that, would he make decisions that you would consider
18 risky?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I would consider
20 risky, no. If I thought there was an issue with the
21 decision I would bring it up with either him or I would
22 go, if I wasn't getting the response I wanted I would
23 go to the designated person ashore. But I've never had
24 to do that.

25 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. Would you say

1 safety was a big focus for him?

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Safety was a focus for
3 all of us.

4 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So when you went to him
5 about the safety meetings, about him not attending how
6 did that go?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He started coming down to
8 the meetings, like I said.

9 INVESTIGATOR BELL: But in general like how
10 did the discussion go? You went to him and told him
11 that you --

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I said you should be at
13 the safety meetings because in the job description it
14 says that the captain is supposed to hold the safety
15 meetings. So not being there, in my opinion, wasn't a
16 good idea.

17 He may have had his reasons for it. He may
18 have wanted all the crew present while he was on the
19 bridge, you know, so that they can all hear what's
20 going on at the meetings. But when I discussed it with
21 him he started coming down to the meetings.

22 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And can we talk just a
23 minute about your, you said in your personal
24 relationship with him, working relationship that it was
25 good. From your standpoint, what you've witnessed, how

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1 would you characterize his relationship with say the
2 third mate?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I would characterize it
4 as good, I guess.

5 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And when I'm saying the
6 third mate I'm talking about --

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Any third mate.

8 INVESTIGATOR BELL: I'm specifically talking
9 about on the crew that was on El Faro.

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well he would deal with
11 multiple third mates. People relieve each other so he
12 would deal with Third Mate Jeremie, as well as third
13 mate Alejandro.

14 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So, okay. Would you
15 notice any differences between his relationships with,
16 working relationships with any of those --

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: With different people?

18 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Yes.

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, not that I've
20 noticed.

21 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. Any conflicts
22 that you can recall?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As far as what?

24 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Any, just conflicts on
25 the bridge with anyone in particular or just a general

1 issue that he had that he shared that you were aware
2 of?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not really. I mean
4 nothing, no major conflicts. I mean there's regular
5 things that go on every day at sea. But there was no
6 conflicts that I recall between him and anybody on the
7 bridge.

8 INVESTIGATOR BELL: What about in relation
9 to the LNG ship selection?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He was disappointed he
11 wasn't selected.

12 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Would you say that he
13 was upset with anyone in particular or took it out on
14 anyone in particular?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It's opinion. I mean I
16 would characterize it as he was upset. I don't think
17 he, you know, was taking it out on people in
18 particular. He was just upset.

19 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Did he talk about that?

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

21 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Anything in particular
22 that you could share with us?

23 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: He just wasn't happy that
24 he wasn't selected.

25 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Do you have any

1 knowledge if he was planning on filing a grievance or
2 if he did that?

3 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I do not know that.

4 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Did he talk about that?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not to me in particular.
6 I don't know if he talked to anybody else about it but
7 he never said anything to me about it.

8 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. Do you know if
9 anyone else has filed any grievances that you know of?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I know of.

11 INVESTIGATOR BELL: I have one more
12 question, one second. Can you talk just a minute about
13 fatigue in general? I know I'm skipping to another
14 topic. But you were mentioning your schedule earlier.
15 Can you tell me what your schedule was again your --

16 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: As far as what, chief
17 mate?

18 INVESTIGATOR BELL: On duty. I'm sorry,
19 yes, as chief mate.

20 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: At sea you work eight
21 hours of bridge watch and then usually four hours on
22 deck so you're doing a 12 hour day.

23 INVESTIGATOR BELL: In general would you
24 characterize yourself as being fatigued on a regular
25 basis?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

2 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Did anybody ever
3 complain about fatigue?

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I know of. I
5 mean we all maintain rest hours so you shouldn't be
6 fatigued. This ship in particular you're doing 70 day
7 trips which is nothing compared to doing ships where
8 you're doing four months and sometimes get stuck for
9 six months at sea.

10 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Yes. That's all the
11 questions I have.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.
13 I'd like to be able to talk to everybody to figure out
14 what happened on the El Faro on this accident voyage.
15 Today we talked to the Second Mate Baird. Second Mate
16 Baird was a navigator and in a late August voyage he
17 had a discussion with the captain.

18 As a result of the discussion that Chief
19 Mate, I mean Second Mate Baird had they took an
20 alternate route. They went down and through the Old
21 Bahama Channel. So I don't have the opportunity to
22 talk to Second Mate Randolph. Did you work with Second
23 Mate Randolph?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. They, both second mates

1 were facing similar weather conditions. In the case of
2 Baird he was looking at Hurricane Danny, Tropical Storm
3 Erica out in the Caribbean and they were getting ready
4 for a departure from Jacksonville.

5 Ms. Randolph as second mate was looking at
6 the potential for Joaquin and what it was going to
7 have. I'm trying to understand the style that the
8 second mate, based on your experience would have in
9 voyage planning. Can you, is there any contrast?

10 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Explain style.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Well in other words, in our
12 conversation with Second Mate Baird he was older than
13 the captain. He forcefully said to us that had he
14 departed Jacksonville in the condition that was out in
15 the Caribbean with Joaquin he would have forcefully
16 said to the captain hey, we shouldn't take that route.

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I'm sure he would have.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And I'm trying to
19 understand Ms. Randolph as the voyage planner who would
20 have set up for this voyage why she would have not said
21 hey, captain, the straight route is not the way to go.
22 As Baird described it, it wasn't life threatening but
23 it would perhaps damage the ship, hurt people.

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't know that
25 Danielle wouldn't have said something. She may have

1 said something. That's their job. They look at the
2 weather as well. I mean Charlie even when he's home
3 sends text messages, hey, are you paying attention to
4 this or paying attention to that.

5 You know, which is above and beyond because
6 he's on vacation. But I don't know that Danielle
7 didn't say something. She may have said something. I
8 mean I wasn't on board.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Did she seem like, based on
10 your experience, as a ship's officer forceful and
11 effective as a leader?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes. When she had to get
13 her point across to the longshoreman she would get her
14 point across to the longshoreman and whether it was
15 fixing lashing or this that or the other thing. I
16 mean, she did her job.

17 MR. [REDACTED] And then, you know, it's one
18 thing to the longshoreman. In the interaction with the
19 captain, you know, as far as second mate goes talking
20 about voyage planning based on your experience --

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I've never had to see her
22 in that situation with him. So I don't, I can't speak
23 for that.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Did you ever see her voyage
25 planning?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The voyage plans were
2 pretty much the same. They've been on the ships for
3 years. Everybody that comes on looks at them. Some
4 captains might come on and want to change a wave point
5 or two, you know, to put their stamp on the route or
6 something like that.

7 But usually it's a, pretty much a set run
8 and you have all your tracks set for whether you're
9 going Northeast Providence Channel, Old Bahama Channel
10 and/or the regular run. I mean they correct the charts
11 and things like that.

12 But as far as actually changing the routes
13 they haven't had to. It's, you can't really change too
14 much going through Old Bahama Channel. I mean you've
15 got traffic separation schemes in certain areas and
16 things like that.

17 Going into and out of Jacksonville to San
18 Juan and from San Juan back to Jacksonville it's pretty
19 much a straight run. So as far as voyage planning, you
20 know, they correct the charts. They do all that stuff.
21 Everybody looks at the voyage plans.

22 If they were going to change something they
23 would all get together and have a discussion about it.
24 But I haven't been in the situation where I've had to
25 see them do that or her interact with him about taking

1 a different route.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. This is Mike
4 Kucharski. A little bit of a change. Lashing margins,
5 are you familiar with that term?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Lashing what?

7 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Margins, M-A-R-G-I-
8 N-S.

9 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Could you explain
11 what your understanding of lashing margins are?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: The way I understand it,
13 it's part of Cargo Max and it will tell you how much
14 lashing you need on the ship as far as the cargo based
15 on GM and everything all taken into account.

16 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Is there a, sorry,
17 are you finished?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I'm finished.

19 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Is there a securing
20 manual for that vessel?

21 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, there's a securing
22 manual for every vessel as far as I know.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Have you ever
24 compared what the securing manual has to what, to Cargo
25 Max?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: On that ship I did at the
2 beginning when I first got on. I can't recall exactly
3 what it was.

4 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So you did the
5 comparison but you don't recollect what it was?

6 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I don't recall off the
7 top of my head exactly what it was. I mean on this
8 ship we're lashing almost every container all the time.
9 Some ships you lash the outboard to, skip a row and
10 lash every other one. You know, being on all the
11 different ships they all have different lashing margins
12 so it's kind of, I don't recall exactly.

13 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were there lashing
14 margins also for RORO cargo?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That I don't recall. As
16 far as the RORO went we just heavy weather lashed so we
17 had extra lashing on all the outboard RORO. Anything
18 by the elevator was heavy weather lashed so that it
19 wouldn't fall down into the elevator.

20 Anything by a watertight door was heavy
21 weather lashed so it wouldn't slide for or aft and hit
22 the watertight door.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Was that performed
24 by the ship's crew or by the longshoreman?

25 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, that was by the

1 longshoreman.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. You
3 mentioned about five meter seas you thought were, would
4 create an uncomfortable ride or something that you
5 wouldn't want to subject the ship to. Is that a fair
6 assessment --

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: -- of what you
9 said? Okay. Was TOTE aware of that, the five meter
10 parameter?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: That I do not know.

12 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Were any, did any
13 of the other captains use that?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It's, that's just the way
15 I felt this trip. I mean, I don't know what, I can't
16 speak for other captains. I don't know what their
17 margins are.

18 All I can tell you is that when we did a sea
19 trial on the west coast and the ship was empty and
20 there was a little bit of weather out there I can't
21 remember exactly what the conditions were. We were
22 rolling, getting slammed around pretty good. So in my
23 opinion there was no reason to even risk that.

24 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. I think I
25 asked you also, this is Mike Kucharski by the way. I

1 think I asked you about the El Faro and the Ponce-class
2 vessels, okay and the five meter parameter and you said
3 you would apply that also to those vessels.

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Well I would apply safe
5 conditions to any vessel. I mean, I would have to be
6 on it and see how the ship rides and things like that
7 and, you know, then make a decision based on what I
8 feel. But those ships I never experienced rough
9 weather really.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: So you would not,
11 you couldn't say whether you would use a five meter
12 parameter on those ships?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: For me I would probably,
14 yes. I would want to be safe.

15 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: There was also a,
16 we understand, a half a foot GM margin. Are you aware
17 of that?

18 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes. There was a GM
19 margin. I can't recall exactly what it was. But there
20 was a GM margin.

21 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Did you have your
22 own personal GM margin that you would like to have
23 excess GM?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: I like to have a margin
25 on any ship I'm on. I mean for bending moments I might

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1 not want to go over 90 percent or 93 percent based on,
2 you know, how accurate are these boxes that are coming
3 on board that are being weighed, things like that.

4 You know, why push the limits if you don't
5 need to. So, you know, as far as a personal margin it
6 differs depending on the ships. But we were never
7 within bending moments on the El Faro. For the most
8 part, I believe, it was always in the 50 percent on all
9 the stability plans.

10 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. That deals
11 with bending moments. Okay. How about GM?

12 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: GM was up to the captain.
13 And when I was on there we had a minimum required GM
14 and then you would consider fuel burn off for what you
15 would arrive at the next port with. And, I mean I
16 can't remember exactly what it was.

17 I would look at the plan or the port captain
18 would call you and tell you what the GM was going to be
19 and then you would, you know, make a decision on either
20 taking cargo off to get more GM or adding cargo to, you
21 know, different sport or moving weight, something like
22 that, ballasts.

23 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when you
24 were chief mate, you were chief mate for almost a year
25 on El Faro and those other ships?

1 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: You weren't aware
3 of any GM margin. You didn't discuss any with the
4 captains?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: It depended on the
6 captain. I mean Captain Axelson wanted us to sail even
7 keel all the time, no list at all. Captain Davidson
8 would, if it was 0.5 port or starboard lists he was
9 okay with that, you know. Each captain has their own
10 parameters.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, sorry. Let
12 me bring it back to GM. Specifically GM, are we
13 familiar with the term GM?

14 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, and each captain had
15 their own GM margin that they would discuss with the
16 port captain.

17 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Didn't discuss it
18 with the chief mate at all?

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, they did. It was,
20 but I can't recall exactly what it was for each
21 captain. It was one had one and one had a different
22 one. I think they wanted you to arrive San Juan with,
23 I can't recall off the top of my head.

24 I mean if I told you a number I wouldn't, I
25 would have to go back and look at all my, you know, the

1 documents that we, stability plans.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when you
3 got the stability for the vessel on departure, did you
4 have any discussions with the master at all on this?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: You would call them if
6 there was something that was questionable otherwise he
7 already knew because the port captain would call him
8 and tell him what the GM was and what the bending
9 moments were and everything. They would usually know
10 before you knew because the port captain would call
11 them and then the port captain would see you and give
12 you the print out on the dock and that was pretty much
13 the way it went.

14 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Did you have
15 any other discussions about GM with the masters of any
16 of the vessels, on the El Faro? How about Captain
17 Davidson? Let's talk specifically about Captain
18 Davidson.

19 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Okay. I believe he
20 wanted a .5 and then arriving with a .25 if I recall.
21 And that's just to the best of my knowledge.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Sure, sure and
23 don't want you to say anything.

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, I mean they all had
25 a parameter but it's, I believe that's what it was. I

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1 can't, you know, it could be off a little bit. But I
2 believe it was a .5 and arriving with a .25.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, that's .5
4 feet obviously?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes.

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any
7 questions about GM margin or anything like that? On
8 the phone? Okay. Last question that I have right now
9 is leaks in holds --

10 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa.

11 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay, Jon.

12 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Hi, Captain, the
13 port captain that would call up Captain Davidson and
14 report the GM, who was that?

15 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Don Matthews.

16 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Matthews?

17 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Yes, Don Matthews.

18 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. So last week
19 we interviewed another port captain, I forgot her name
20 now.

21 INVESTIGATOR BELL: It was Eunice Cadorette
22 Young.

23 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: What was her name
24 again?

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Eunice Cadorette

1 Young we interviewed last week.

2 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Right, right. Would
3 she call GM to Captain Davidson also --

4 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No.

5 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: -- or was it just
6 Don Matthews?

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Just Don Matthews and if
8 Don was out Ronald Rodriguez would be the point of
9 contact.

10 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay. And Don
11 Matthews he is a port captain or he is the head
12 (inaudible)?

13 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: They refer to him as port
14 captain. I don't know his exact title. He's a port
15 captain, director of ops down at the dock.

16 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay, for TOTE.
17 Okay, thank you. That's all I have.

18 MR. PETERSON: This is Lee Peterson with
19 TOTE. Just for the record Don Matthews official title
20 is manager of marine operations. He was previously
21 known as the port captain and that title has held on
22 with a lot of people.

23 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Manager of
24 operations?

25 MR. PETERSON: Manager of marine operations.

1 INVESTIGATOR FURUKAWA: Okay, thank you.

2 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Last question.

3 Were there any leaks in the holds that you were aware
4 of?

5 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Leaks in the holds?

6 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Yes.

7 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not that I was aware of.

8 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: None of the sailors
9 brought to your attention any leaks in any of the
10 holds?

11 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Not in the holds. Guys
12 complained about water in their bedrooms. But I mean,
13 that was the boatswain in the one time getting reading
14 for his shower had his shower running.

15 It was going against the bulkhead and the
16 caulking I guess on the base tray or whatever of his
17 shower was, you know, it's a 40 year old ship was
18 coming apart and the guy next door had water running
19 from his shower underneath his bunk.

20 You know, but no leaks in holds or anything
21 like that. Just things like that.

22 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Any further
23 questions? Is there anything you would like to add?

24 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: No, sir.

25 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you.

1 Stop the interview.

2 CAPTAIN THOMPSON: Thank you.

3 INVESTIGATOR KUCHARSKI: Time is 18:19.

4 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
5 off the record at 6:19 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE COAST
OF THE BAHAMAS ON OCT. 1, 2015
NTSB Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Capt. Ray Thompson

DATE: 12-06-14

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 125 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR
RAYMOND THOMPSON
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DECEMBER 6, 2015

PAGE NUMBE	LINE NUMBE	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
10	14	a	as
10	18	AMC	AMSEA
11	5	Siprim	Cyprine
19	12	five	fire
21	11	pod	Ponce
26	23	instability	stability
46	21	don't	do
52	21	door in	during
53	8	Axelson	Axelsson
54	17	port	Portus
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59	6	go around go around	go around
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104	3	was it wasn't	Was or wasn't
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118	21	sport	spot
123	13	reading	ready

RAYMOND T. THOMPSON III

Printed Name of Person providing the above information


 Signature of Person providing the above information

22 DEC 2015

Date

TABLE OF SUGGESTED CORRECTS TO TRANSCRIPT
OF INTERVIEW FOR RAYMOND THOMPSON
TAKEN ON DECEMBER 6, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CHANGE	NTSB RESPONSE
10	14	A	As	Do not agree. Transcript correct as is
10	18	AMC	AMSEA	AGREE
11	5	Siprim	Cyprine	AGREE
19	12	Five	fire	AGREE
21	11	Pod	Ponce	AGREE
26	23	Instability	stability	Do not agree. Should be "and stability"
46	21	Don't	Do	Do not agree. Transcript is correct as is
52	21	Door in	during	AGREE
53	8	Axelson	Axelsson	AGREE
54	17	Port	Portus	AGREE
55	20	Tights	Tight	AGREE
56	24	Portis	Portus	AGREE
59	6	Go around go around	Go around	AGREE
66	4	Meeting	mate	Do not agree. Sounds like "mating"
66	8	Hole	Hold	AGREE
71	3	I	it	AGREE
71	5	Bar graph	Barograph	AGREE
72	2	-----	A half	Do not agree. Transcript correct as is
87	24	Late	Light	AGREE
90	25	Wave	way	AGREE
95	10	I was going I was going	I was going	AGREE
96	1	Of	or	AGREE
100	5	I	They	AGREE
103	3	Wave	way	AGREE
104	3	Was it wasn't	Was or wasn't	AGREE
113	4	Wave	way	AGREE
115	9	To	Two	AGREE
115	21	For	fore	AGREE
118	21	Sport	spot	Do not agree. Sounds like "spots"
123	13	Reading	ready	AGREE